Introduction

It is the policy of this Diocese that the norm for compensated clergy is that they be employed on a full-time basis and compensated in accordance with the compensation policy adopted by Diocesan Convention. However, subject to the prior and continual approval of the Bishop, a congregation may extend a call, and a priest, or a stipendiary deacon may accept such a call, to a position which is to be compensated at a level below the mandated (or, in some cases, recommended) by the Diocese for full-time work for that congregation’s applicable grade and range, provided that:

1. The Letter of Agreement shall specify the hours of work (based on a 40-hour week) and the percentage of time being contracted for which reflects that percentage of the applicable full-time salary represented by the agreed-upon compensation.

2. A Covenant of Understanding for Part-Time Ministry shall be developed and attached to the Letter of Agreement. This document shall be published abroad in the congregation so that the congregation will be informed that:
   a. The position to which the clergyperson is being called is not a full-time position.
   b. The reason why the position is not a full-time position.
   c. The clergyperson alone shall determine the use of her/her non-contracted time.
   d. When seasonal liturgical events, parish programs, pastoral, or parochial emergencies, etc. require additional hours of work beyond those specified in the Letter of Agreement, the clergyperson is entitled to paid compensatory time off in lieu of additional compensation.
   e. The Letter of Agreement shall provide for four weeks of paid vacation each year, plus two weeks of paid Continuing Education leave and such Sabbatical Leave as may be mutually agreed-upon subject to the Sabbatical Leave Policy adopted by the Diocese.
   f. Whenever the percentage of time for a Pat-Time ministry is 50% or above, the congregation shall pay in full all applicable Church Pension Fund assessments, health, life, and dental insurance premiums providing full coverage for both the compensated clergyperson and his/her family members. When the percentage of time is less than 50%, the congregation may negotiate with the clergyperson regarding the percentage of these premiums and benefits to be paid.
   g. While nothing precludes the clergyperson from voluntarily using his/her non-contracted time to exercise ministry within the congregation or to carry out other job-related activities, there shall be no written or unwritten agreement or expectation on the part of the congregation that this be done.

3. In all cases where clergy are called to minister on a part-time basis, the written consent of the Bishop shall be obtained prior to the commencement of work and such consent shall be sought and renewed annually or whenever compensation or hour of work are adjusted.

4. The application form for Consent to A Part-Time Ministry shall include the following:
   a. The name of the congregation.
   b. The name of the clergyperson and the position or title of the ministry to be held.
   c. The period of time for which consent is being sought.
d. The reason why the position is not to be a full-time position.

e. The appropriate Full-Time salary for such position as provided in the Diocesan Salary Guidelines.

f. The salary and other benefits agreed-upon for the period.

g. The percentage of Full-Time Salary represented by the Salary to be paid ($6/5 = #7$

h. The number of hours per week representing a full-time equivalent, i.e. 40 hours

i. The weekly number of hours of work agreed upon ($8 \times 7 = #9$

The clergyperson and wardens shall sign the application for Consent. When signed and returned by the Bishop, the Consent form shall be appended to the Letter of Agreement.
Let's Face This Issue!

PART-TIME CLERGY—AN OXYMORON?

by Kenneth M. Snyder

The Old Scenario
Remember the good old days? Maybe thirty or more years ago, or even less—maybe a decade? When you felt that God was calling you to the sacred ministry? When you presented yourself to your bishop (hopefully, after talking with your parish priest beforehand!) and told of your hopes and dreams? The surge of excitement when you were accepted, first as a postulant and then, as a candidate? Finally after years of preparation, study and examination, filled with process and many prayers, the Church found you to be a fit person, in that awesome ceremony, ordained you.

With anticipation, you looked forward to a new career in which you would be called or appointed to a cure where your whole life could focus on carrying out the tasks of ministry. You just knew there would be a place for you. Oh sure, you had been warned that there might not be—a warning which has become more and more explicit in recent years. But, even so, you had faith. Certainly, you said to yourself, some place will open up. Someone will discern your dedication, recognize your potential and choose you out of the pack to be their priest. Maybe not as rector of a big parish, at least not right away, but a place where you could serve. In return, you believed that the congregation or organization you would be serving would make adequate provision for meeting your temporal and personal needs and those of your family. And that this would be the case through the years.

In this scenario, which applied in the lives of a majority of us who are priests today, the underlying assumption was that this was a full-time calling. While we knew that the Church didn’t guarantee to employ us, that’s exactly what most of us expected would happen.

The New Reality
Having this expectation fulfilled was not particularly unusual or difficult in those days when the number of clergy was insufficient to fill the number of positions available in congregations seeking to employ them. That is not the case these days. The number of the ordained continues to rise. At the same time, the number of ordinary positions is shrinking, though the rate of decrease has significantly slowed in recent years. And, in the face of the current financial crisis (largely a self-inflicted crisis, I believe—but that’s another subject!), the phenomena of a part-time ministry has become much more commonplace.

The simple fact is that much has changed in the past forty years. The ideal set forth in the Prayer Book is that every priest will be able to have a full-time position in which to exercise ministry. No matter how much we would like this to be true, the Church lacks the resources to achieve this ideal. The issue before us is how can we deal with the reality without sacrificing the role of priesthood.

At the heart of the problem is a confusion between what ordination commits us to be and to do. Any rational reading of the ordination vows makes it clear that we are called to a ministry in Christ’s church which involves our whole life. And we want to fulfill our vows. We want to meet the expectations which we have for ourselves and which we recognize the Church has for us. But it is becoming more apparent that these vows do not promise that the Church will employ us in a stipendiary position—whether it be full-time or part-time!

Getting It Clear
Up front, we need to deal with the conflict that exists between our understandings of the promises we make in ordination and the way in which we subsequently use our time and support ourselves. We need to be clear about the fact that there is a big difference between the commitment we make in ordination and the circumstances in which we are going to be able to carry out our promises.

We need to come to common agreement on the answer to this question: Is it possible to be faithful to our vows and fulfill a role as a priest and yet apply ourselves to occupations outside the church? What we are dealing with here is a significant generational gap in understanding. Younger clergy (by that, I mean those ordained in the past 10-15 years) have no problem coming up with the answer to this question. For, after all, that has been what they’ve had to deal with all along. Once the clergy surplus was recognized, bishops have been much more careful about telling candidates that there could be no assurance of a job once they got out of seminary. This

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- The Archangel Gabriel Might Not Apply!  p. 3
  by The Rt. Rev. Philip Goodrich
- Draft Policy on Part-Time Employment  p. 4
- NNECA 25—Our Silver Anniversary Meeting Information and Registration Form  p. 5
- Around The Network (NNECA News)  p. 6
Part-Time Employment (Cont’d from p. 1)
reality has been particularly true for many women who found the church was willing to ordain them but far less willing to make a
place for them in positions which afforded full-time employment.

But for clergy ordained many years, it is a different story. For them, the scenario outlined above was psychological truth. To be
ordained meant that you were devoting your whole life, “...body, soul and spirit,” to the work of the priesthood and this would be
done working in and for the church. And that was how lay people saw it, too! Simply put, a part-time priest was an oxymoron.

It hasn’t been that many years since a bishop in Province 8 made it his routine practice to seek the deposition of any priest
who was not willing to leave the diocese who chose to leave the diocese for secular employment or was not able to find
work for more than a year. While this response to a priest who didn’t have his name carved in the wood sign outside some parish was
usual, it did reflect an understanding quite prevalent in years past.

More often, however, the appearance of a priest without cure led to
criticism and controversy about dedication and motivation. It was true in my own case. In 1968, when I elected to leave the staff of the Diocese
of Olympia to pursue secular employment, people—my colleagues included—had a hard time reconciling this decision with my vows
as a priest. In fact, one priest chided me in a public forum quoting Luke 9:62, “No one who sets his hand to the plough and then
looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” (NEB) It hurt at the time, but looking back, I can see it simply reflected the confusion about
what ordination means. He, like many others then, just didn’t know
what to do with a priest who was not employed full-time by the Church or, at the least, who was not looking for such employment.

Yet, a few years later, a bishop asked a friend of mine, “Why did
you leave the ministry?” Well, the fact was, I hadn’t. In fact, I
was a part-time ministry for more than a dozen years.

Today, what was unusual and exceptional just twenty years ago is
now considered to be commonplace. More and more clergy are
being employed on a part-time basis. Sometimes these part-time
ministries are coupled with other employment in the secular
world, sometimes not.

Where It Begins To Bite
The reality of stipendium ministry in the Episcopal Church today
is that an increasing number of positions are being considered to
be part-time—at least as far as compensation is concerned. It’s about
time that we face up to the conflict that this phenomena presents
for clergy—particularly for those who have been ordained for a
decade or more. The rules have changed and unless we think
through the implications of what “part-time” really means for a
priest (as well as a congregation), all sorts of professional and
emotional pressures will surface.

A lot of things are wrapped up in this. Our calling. Our feelings
of self-worth and self-esteem. Our responsibilities to ourselves and
our families. Our ability to carry on our ministry without undue
pressure due to financial insecurity. Our physical and emotional
resources, i.e., time, energy, freedom from guilt, etc., in the face
of often unrelenting expectations of the congregation. And then
there is the issue of compensation, which is not the least
important element to remember in approaching negotiations for a
part-time position. The clear teaching of St. Paul pertains here
that the “workman is worthy of his hire.”

Based on historical evidence, clergy should not be surprised if
some congregational leaders will try to take financial advantage of
some money. Excessively cynical? Maybe. But, in a day when a
leading, and well-respected, fiscal authority in the Episcopal Church goes around proclaiming that “the day of full-time
stipendium clergy is over...!”, it well behoves clergy to examine carefully the real reasons behind the decision to offer a
stipendium ministry position on a part-time basis.

The reasons for part-time ministries vary from place to place. Not
all situations where clergy work in part-time stipendium positions result from declining resources. Many smaller congregations,
even those experiencing growth, never have—they probably will never be—able to employ clergy on a full-time basis. In other situations, congregations desiring to expand their mission with new programs or to give added support to an overworked rector,
find that their limited resources will only afford additional clergy
on a part-time basis. In still other circumstances, clergy are being asked to divide their time between congregations or between a
congregation and some other type of employment, secular or sacred. It must be noted, however, that the reason for a part-time
situation is critically important in assessing the call.

Whatever the circumstance, clergy are having to look carefully at
the arrangements which they are being asked to make in such
situations. The old compact won’t work. You know: “If you will
provide for my basic needs, and those of my family, I will devote
myself to the ministry to which you have called me!”

Over the years, I have noted that there is a wide gap between what
priests are expected to do (and be) and what parishioners are able (or willing) to compensate for. In every part-time position, this gap is
exacerbated. When congregations which are used to having a full-
time clergy are forced to move to a part-time status, there is a
decided interval before the level of expectations for the work of
clergy is adjusted to the new circumstances. In some cases, this
adjustment is never made. And, unfortunately in far too many
cases, clergy participate in maintaining the illusion that nothing
has changed in terms of what members of the congregation can
expect in the way of time and attention of the priest.

In real life, there is more involved in decisions to go to a part-time
basis than just the dollars and cents involved. Often, congregations
feel that this represents a failure on their part and this new
arrangement is something to be disguised. This can take several
forms. One is to minimize this new reality by trying to make sure
that there is no discernible difference between what was before and
what is now. This can lead to pressure upon the part-time clergyperson to keep everything as before: programs, services,
office hours, etc. Another is to summon up rhetorical flights of
fancy to proclaim that the parish has moved boldly into the future
shape of the Church and undertaken a new (possibly even
spiritually) advanced type of ministry. Whether or not this is true
will be seen in the kind of relationship the parish works out with
the part-time priest, i.e. there will be clearly defined expectations
for exactly what services are being contracted for and arrangements
set up for seeing that programs and activities not contracted for will
be carried on by others and that the need for the commitment
of extra-time by the priest will be monitored and minimized.
Otherwise, it is likely just a way to save face.

Letters of Agreement Are Essential
Since part-time positions are distinctly different from full-time
positions which have a long history of practices and experience,
carefully drawn Letter of Agreement is even more essential.

Continued on Page 5
Part-Time Employment (Cont’d from p. 2)

For several decades the clergy association movement has been promoting the development and use of Letters of Agreement between congregations and their clergy. Some of us have difficulty with any terminology which implies anything less than a “spiritual” understanding of the relationship between a priest and people. But, this is where the rub often is. While a full-time ministry can easily be seen as a “calling,” part-time positions are much more amenable to being understood as employment situations governed by some of the same considerations as apply in a secular occupation.

Since the potential for misunderstanding and disagreement is much larger in part-time situations, the careful spelling out of the details of the expectations and arrangements for such a ministry is vitally important. Once these details are agreed upon by the vestry/bishop’s committee and the clergy, it also extremely important that the members of congregation be fully informed of what has been done. In this way, many of the boundary issues which are sure to come up can be averted. This is why the diocesan policy outlined below calls for a Covenant of Understanding to be attached to the Letter of Agreement and that it be published abroad through the congregation.

Every diocese should have specific guidelines and policies governing the Part-Time Employment of clergy.

In recent years, many dioceses have spelled out policies for the contractual arrangements between clergy and their congregations. Sample Letters of Agreements have been developed and disseminated. Procedures have been established to monitor compliance with these policies. But, too often, these really are based on the old assumption that ministry is a full-time calling. Specific policies intended to govern part-time employment have not been developed. For instance, in my own diocese (Olympia) which has a carefully drawn Compensation Policy for Parochial Clergy since 1980 which includes a Mandatory Compensation Schedule, no statement governing Part-Time Employment has existed. At present, CADO (our local clergy association) has developed such a policy and it will be considered as the diocesan Personnel Commission goes about its work in 1995. (The draft text of the proposed policy is printed at the end of this article.)

Issues To Be Dealt With in Letters of Agreement

What are the issues for clergy as the Church increasingly turns to the employment of clergy on a part-time basis?

Clergy who consider negotiating a Letter of Agreement calling for a part-time ministry should keep the following in mind as the LOA is written:

**Time of Work.** This is the number one pitfall in setting up a part-time ministry. While the congregation is clear that they can pay only so much for salary and benefits, and this is expressed in a short-hand way by use of terms such as “half-time” or “three-quarters-time,” what is really being said is “This is all we are able–or willing–to pay for the presence of an ordained person. However, we still expect all the benefits of a clergy presence.”

**Insurance Coverages.** It is important that each clergy person and his/her family be fully covered for health and dental insurance. If a clergy person is to be employed by a congregation on a less than full-time basis, that congregation should be responsible for full coverage unless it is otherwise available to the family from other sources. For instance, if the clergy person is employed by another congregation or another employer and the two positions together would provide full coverage, the congregation may negotiate to pay its share of the cost of premiums providing full coverage. Or, if a spouse is employed and receives coverage as part of that job, the congregation could negotiate to pay only the balance (if any) of the premiums due.

To argue that the congregation is only responsible for the pro-rata share of health insurance, for instance, is like proposing that a priest employed on a 50%-time basis would live in the church’s rectory just 50% of the time! It is in the best interest of the church that the priest and his/her family be healthy and secure.

**Life Insurance.** If the diocese has arranged for a group life insurance policy on clergy, the congregation should pay the premium for the full benefit provided any other clergy person.

**Vacation.** I recently had occasion to talk to a priest who was half-time vicar of a mission congregation in my diocese. When I asked how much vacation time he received each year, he replied, “Two weeks.” When I asked why only two weeks, he said it was because he was employed on a 50%-time basis. I pointed out that the diocesan policy was that every rector or vicar was entitled to four weeks vacation for rest and replenishment. Since it was vacation with pay, he was entitled to the full four weeks at the same rate of compensation (i.e. 50%) as any other week of the year.

**Continuing Education and Sabbatical Leave Benefits.** The same principal applies here. The number of weeks of time to be taken for Continuing Education and Sabbatical Leave purposes should be the same for part-time clergy as for those employed full-time. The only difference is the amount of compensation to be paid during these periods.

**Compensatory Time.** One of the principal concerns clergy need to keep in mind as they begin part-time employment is the tendency to work well beyond the contracted time because of what seems to be a temporary emergency or a seasonal requirement. Obviously, pastoral care emergencies are seldom amenable to advance scheduling. Also, special parish programs or liturgical seasons may not lend themselves to limiting the number of hours spent on the job. While you may say that you can make an exception in a specific case, two bad things usually result. First, you will find it easier and easier to accede to the demands for extra time and you will be providing more presence and ministry than contracted for. This will be added drain on your time and resources, particularly if the position is being carried on in conjunction with some other time commitment. Second, the more available you are above and beyond the time contracted for, the easier it will be for the congregation to avoid the necessity of working toward a restoration of full-time service and it will foster the already likely perception that a part-time basis is a pretty good deal for them. I recommend that you take compensatory time for hours spent in excess of the contracted amount. Nothing can (or should) prevent you from giving time to the parish if you so choose. But it should definitely be your choice, not something the congregation can come to expect from you.

**Full-Time Salary.** The Letter of Agreement should clearly state the salary (or stipend plus housing) which the position would call for if the priest were employed on a full-time basis. This is easiest to do in a diocese like mine where congregations are graded and an appropriate salary for each grade is established. In a diocese which does not have a salary schedule, there is probably a minimum salary established which could serve the purpose. But, it is not possible to determine the percentage of time being contracted for unless there is a salary amount established for full-time against which the proposed part-time salary can be measured.

*Continued on Page 8*
Part-Time Employment (Cont’d from p. 7)

Advance Approval of the Bishop. While the actual decision as to ther a position is to be full-time or part-time usually rests with the congregation involved, it is also a matter of policy that a bishop is involved in the ministry of all the ordained serving in the diocese. It is clearly the bishop’s responsibility to see that the ministry of the church is available to all members. When a congregation which has heretofore been served by a full-time clergyperson considers moving to a part-time status, this must be of concern to the bishop. In many cases, the reason for this change will be strictly financial. However, on occasion, it is not. Over the years, we have all seen situations where a parish wanting their priest to leave will seek to reduce the level of compensation being paid. This is often the first indication that trouble is brewing. In those dioceses where a mandatory salary schedule is in effect, congregations seeking to pressure a rector to leave will only be able to do this by reducing the full-time status to part-time. This is a splendid opportunity for judicatory intervention before the situation gets out of hand. In any case, however, the bishop will not be meeting his/her responsibility to uphold the canons if this type of end-run around the dissolution process were allowed to go on. Any diocesan policy on part-time employment of clergy should require the permission of the bishop.

Use of Non-Contracted Time. It must be clearly understood by all parties that the clergyperson is fully entitled to use non-contracted time in any way in which he/she may choose. While nothing precludes a clergyperson from voluntarily using his/her non-contracted time to exercise ministry within the congregation or to y out job-related activities, there must be no written or unwritten agreement or expectation of the part of the congregation that the non-contracted time will be so used. Nor should a congregation feel entitled to a veto on any activity on the part of the clergyperson outside the contracted hours.

Provision for Review and Renewal. A Letter of Agreement which is developed at the beginning of a pastoral relationship needs to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. In Olympia, where the diocese requires that such an agreement be developed whenever a new ministry is begun, encourages the priest and congregation to update it annually and to keep a current copy on file in the Bishop’s Office. Yet, I have talked with a number of rectors and vicars who signed one initially, put it in the file, and have never gotten around to keeping it current. If the document includes references to subjects such as the congregation’s goals and objectives, the rector/vicar’s job description, ministry review, as well as compensation items and provisions for time of work, sabbaticals, continuing education etc., it is important to look at them carefully on a regular basis—if for no other reason that to make sure that members of the ever-changing vestries/bishop’s committees are fully aware of the details under which the pastoral relationship is being carried on.

Time Limits. If the congregation represents that the part-time basis of the initial call will be only temporary, i.e., or maintains that they expect that once you arrive among them, growth will begin to take place and they will soon be able to upgrade the position to full-time, make sure that this is spelled out in the Letter of Agreement and that provision be made for periodic status reviews and benchmarks which will provide for changes in the percentage of time (and compensation, too!) as the situation changes.

The Rev. Kenneth M. Snyder is a retired priest canonically resident in the Diocese of Olympia and currently serves as NNECA’s Field Secretary. In 1978-80, he was instrumental in the development of Olympia’s policy on clergy compensation which has since served as a model used by a number of other dioceses. He has written about this subject in articles previously published in LEAVEN and continues to be active as a consultant on compensation matters across the Episcopal Church.

Please Note: A draft of a proposed diocesan policy on Part-Time Employment can be found on page 5 of this issue.

The Archangel Gabriel Might Not Apply (cont’d from p. 3) supermarket. The sense of call, the sense of obedience surely should not be lost. Nor should lay people be unaware of what the new system is doing to clergy who, perhaps in their youth, took the course of no turning back for Christ and his Church and now find themselves in a bunker and almost out of play.

As in so many other facets of the contemporary Church, a corporate response is needed. Continuing ministerial education, work appraisal, the availability of sabbaticals, and even a cautious use of counseling will all have their place. Dioceses are undoubtedly using many resources, and the Advisory Board for Ministry is helping. However, the man or woman who still has something to offer and for whom a move would be beneficial, as it would be for the parish, should not be forgotten.

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